

Summary of Input and Recommendations of the State Rehabilitation Council; Response of the Designated State Unit; And Explanations for Rejection of Input or Recommendations

SBVI State Rehabilitation Council

The Board of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired (Board), the state rehabilitation council for the Division of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired (Division), is in place to advise the Division in accordance with Title I, Section 105 of the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998. The Board advises the Division in the development of state plans, policy related to the expenditure of federal funds and state funds and the coordination of planning and service delivery to individuals involved in vocational rehabilitation and independent living services. The Board serves as a representative for all individuals who are blind and visually impaired needing vocational rehabilitation and independent living services within the state. The Board's mission statement reflects these priorities: "*The mission of the Board of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired is to promote independence, employment and full inclusion for all citizens who are blind or visually impaired.*" All Board agendas are developed by the Board's Executive Committee with the Division Director. The Board is provided all policies in draft format and provided the opportunity for input prior to finalization of policies. No recommendations by the Board of SBVI were rejected by the Division during the plan period.

Public Meetings - Public meetings are held on an annual basis to solicit input into the State Plan as well as to identify priorities for improving services to citizens who are blind or visually impaired. The Board of SBVI identifies appropriate topics for discussion and makes recommendations on meeting locations. Board members facilitate each of the meetings.

The Division agreed with the topics recommended by the board to be addressed at public meetings. The Division held meetings at locations recommended by the board with Board members serving as facilitators at the meetings. Input is shared with the board and strategies implemented to address public input.

Governor's Awards for Employment of People with Disabilities - An annual "Governor's Luncheon" is held to recognize the efforts of individuals, employers and organizations for their contributions to the employment of persons with disabilities. This annual event is a joint effort of the Board of Vocational Rehabilitation, Board of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired and the Department of Human Services. The Board of SBVI voted to support attendance by board members.

The Division supported the Board's recommendation to support luncheon costs and attendance by board members. The Division also supported the Board in submitting nominations for individuals to be considered for the Governor's awards.

Consumer Satisfaction Survey - A Board committee recommended the format and questions for the consumer satisfaction survey.

The Division accepted board recommendations on format and content of the consumer satisfaction surveys. Follow-up phone calls are conducted for those individuals who do not respond to the mail survey. This practice is based on the Board's recommendation to ensure access to the survey instrument for individuals with vision loss. Results were reported to the Board and included in the annual report.

Public Relations Activities by Board Members – The Board Public Relations committee prepared nominations for the Governor's Awards Luncheon on Employment of People with Disabilities.

SBVI supported the Board's recommendations for nominations for Governor's Awards for employment of individuals with disabilities.

Board Bylaws – The board bylaw committee met to review the bylaws and made recommendations on edits to the full board. Changes addressed make up of the Board executive committee to exclude the past chair as a member of the executive committee. Other changes were minor and consisted of cleaning up language in the bylaws and standing agenda items. All recommendations were voted on and supported by the full Board.

The Division of SBVI implemented recommendations on changes to the bylaws.

Nominations for Board Vacancies – The Board of SBVI recommended individual's names to be submitted to the Governor's office for consideration of appointment for Board vacancies.

The Division submitted names recommend by the Board for consideration of appointment by the Governor.

National Disability Employment Awareness Month Activities - October is National Disability Employment Awareness Month. The Boards of Vocational Rehabilitation and SBVI along with the respective divisions in the Department of Human Services planned activities in communities across the state to increase awareness of the capabilities of individuals with disabilities to work during October 2006. Activities included awards luncheons, presentations by successful individuals with disabilities, public service announcements, newspaper articles, and recognitions of outstanding employers and outstanding employees with disabilities.

The Division of SBVI agrees with the Boards involvement with and contributions to National Disability Employment Awareness Month activities.

Board Representation at Consumer Organization Conventions - The Board of SBVI has made the commitment to financially support the attendance of consumers and a representative of the Board each year at state conventions of consumer organizations

such as National Federation of the Blind of South Dakota and South Dakota Association of the Blind.

The Division supported the Board's recommendation for Board member representation at consumer organization conventions and Board sponsorship of stipends for individuals who are blind or visually impaired to attend the state conventions of consumer organizations. Board and public meetings are held in conjunction with consumer organization conventions, when possible.

Transition Services for Youth who are Blind or Visually Impaired – The Board of SBVI recommended that the Division sponsor a session to address post secondary planning and skills of blindness for students who are blind or visually impaired. The session will be held in Aberdeen at the SD School for the Blind and Visually Impaired during the summer of 2006 with support from SBVI staff. Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors will work with students to attend as part of the Individual Plans for Employment.

Transition week was held July 24-29, 2005 at SDRC. Activities were based on suggestions by the Board of SBVI. The 2006 session will be led by staff at the SD School for the Blind and Visually Impaired. Suggestions from the Board of SBVI will be shared with those planning the session.

Assistive Technology Services – Assistive technology services and training are keys to education and employment for citizens with vision loss. The Board of SBVI participates in making recommendations for assistive technology activities. Dakota Link, the states assistive technology project, provides one to one evaluation and training on a fee for service basis to those referred via an agreement with the division. An employee of Dakota Link is the Community Rehabilitation Program representative on the Board of SBVI.

A summer computer class was held at Dakota State University during the summer of 2005 and will again be offered during the summer of 2006. The curriculum is based on key board commands and voice output utilized with JAWS and Microsoft Office programs. Three undergraduate credits are available to those who successfully complete the course. The majority of participants are current consumers of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired. A competency test will be required for those planning to attend to ensure that they have appropriate skills to participate in the course. The course is also open to transition age students who are prepared to participate in college level course work.